



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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INSIDE
TRACKS

The Newsletter of Region One

Volume 11, Number 2

Summer 2001

Flathead Lake Honoring Focuses on Water Quality and Fish

A new event symbolizes the close cooperation between the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT), Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), and other agencies, and recognizes the importance of native fish and water quality.

The first Flathead Lake Honoring Day was held June 16 around the shores of Flathead Lake. This annual event was suggested by the citizen

advisory committee for the Flathead Lake and River Fisheries Co-management Plan adopted late last year. The purpose of the event is to involve the public and agencies in activities highlighting Flathead Lake fisheries and water quality.

Along with FWP and CSKT, the Honoring Day was co-sponsored by

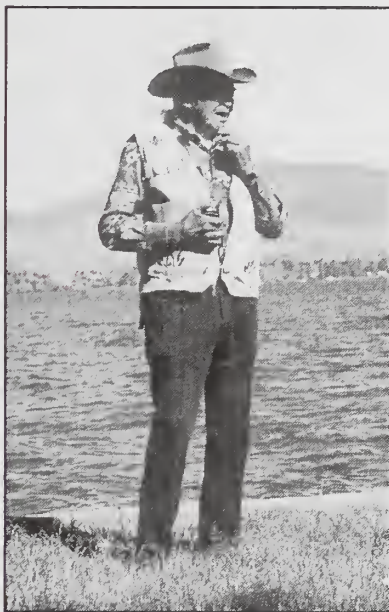
the Flathead Lake Biological Station, the Flathead Lakers, and the Polson, Bigfork, and Kalispell chambers of commerce.

The event started off with an honoring ceremony at Sacajawea Park in Polson. Tribal Elder Pat Pierre opened with a prayer, then the (Cont. on Page 2)

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DRUMBEAT. The Native American drumming group Sn-Ye-Le-Mn performs at the Honoring Ceremony.



TRIBAL ELDER Pat Pierre emphasizes the importance of all people working together to manage Flathead Lake.

HONORING THE LAKE. Researcher Bonnie Ellis of the Flathead Lake Biological Station speaks to a group aboard the research vessel, the "Jessie B."



Flathead Lake Honoring...

(Cont. from Page 1)

drum group Sn-Ye-Le-Mn from St. Ignatius performed a song. Pierre went on to give a speech about the value of Flathead Lake to all people, and the importance of working together to manage the lake. Finally, Sn-Ye-Le-Mn performed several more songs to close out the ceremony. Afterwards, fish identification displays and literature were available for the public.

At the Flathead Lake Biological Station, guests were treated to rides on the research boat, the "Jessie B". Researchers Bonnie Ellis and Jim Craft presented talks on the station's work on the lake, and an-

swered questions on water quality issues. They also demonstrated how water transparency readings are taken from the boat. Station Director Dr. Jack Stanford, Mark Lorang, Ric Hauer, John Kimball, and other researchers were on hand to visit with the public, and had displays set up on the lake's aquatic life. Graduate students Melissa Franklin and Pam Keil discussed their project on Sierra Dome spiders. Charlie and Leann Blem conducted nature walks and had bird and mammal displays.

As part of the honoring day, admission at the state parks around the lake was free. People helped clean up a few sites, and some brush was

cleared by a crew on Wild Horse Island.

About 1,000 Lake Honoring booklets have been distributed to the public. These booklets feature a topographic map of the lake, and feature information on the fish populations and fishery of Flathead Lake. Inserts focus on water quality and lake stewardship. The information highlights the fisheries co-management direction of encouraging fisheries harvest of non-native fish such as lake trout and lake whitefish, to reduce competition with native bull trout and westslope cutthroat. A limited number of booklets are still available on request (call FWP (752-5501) or CSKT (675-2700 x 1299)).

12-Year-Old Wins Paddlefest Race

Twelve year-old Stan Tivovarov won the cardboard kayak race at the Northern Rockies Paddlefest in late May. Racers have about an hour to construct a kayak from cardboard and packing tape, then race a short course along the shoreline of Flathead Lake.

Stan's boat was the only craft to make it to the finish line before sink-

ing. Art Sedlack helped build the kayak. The Paddlefest, held each year at Wayfarers state park site, offers people a chance to try out a number of kayaks and canoes with experts available to help and answer questions. The Paddlefest is organized by FWP's Jerry Sawyer with the help of local sporting and boat shops.



Kids Get Hands on Nature at Forestry Expo



More than 1,200 fifth graders attended this year's Family Forestry Expo on F. H. Stoltze timberlands near Columbia Falls. FWP organizes the fisheries station and assists with the wildlife station for the week-long event. Students can handle live fish and bugs, and they view birds displayed by an animal rehabilitator. Students also study plant identification, archaeology, and forestry practices. After the five student days, families attend the Expo on Saturday and Sunday. This year, well over 1,000 people attended the weekend event. The Expo highlights the importance of foresters and wildlife professionals working together to manage the forest.

EXPO TALK. FWP Fisheries Manager Jim Vashro talks to students about fish identification at the Forestry Expo fisheries site.

Palmer Property Added to Ninepipe WMA

A 110-acre parcel of prime habitat for pheasants and other wildlife has been acquired by FWP. The parcel borders and will add to the Ninepipe Wildlife Management Area.


Flathead Reservation Fish and Wildlife Board Member Bob Lucas says the property is a very valuable addition. "This is tremendous habitat for pheasants, waterfowl, and other wildlife," he says. "Opportunities to acquire this type of property are few and far between and I'm glad FWP acted on it." Lucas is also a member of the Big Sky Upland Bird Association, which supported the purchase and helped make it a reality. Also playing a big part was the Mission Valley Chapter of Pheasants

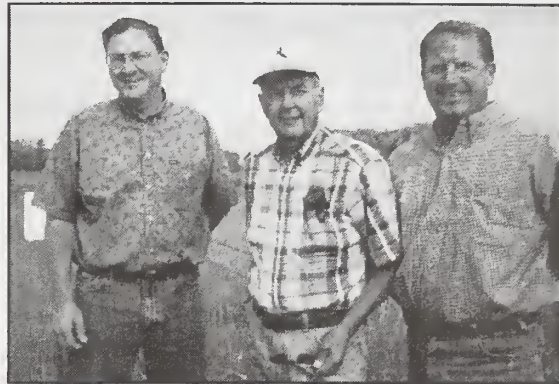
Forever, who made a substantial donation to the purchase.

Rich Lane, FWP Commissioner from Missoula, guided the project through approval by the FWP Commission. "This is something we can be proud to pass along to our future generations for hunting and viewing opportunities," says Lane. "It would be hard to find a more scenic and valuable piece of pheasant habitat."

SAVING PRIME HABITAT. Ray Aylesworth (left), Bob Lucas, and Rich Lane were instrumental in FWP's acquisition of the 110-acre Palmer property, now part of the Ninepipe Wildlife Management Area. The trio are pictured in a recent tour of the property.

Ray Aylesworth, Chairman of the Flathead Reservation Fish and Wildlife Board, showed the Board's critical support through passage of a resolution calling for swift action on the purchase.

For more information on the project, contact Wildlife Manager Jim Williams at FWP in Kalispell. 




Local Instructors Shine at International Hunter Education Meeting

A number of local Hunter Education Instructors participated in the International Hunter Education Conference in early June held in Missoula. Instructors took part in planning sessions that will help set the future course of the association, which coordinates Hunter Education in the United States and Canada. Contacts are also being made in Mexico and other countries. Participants came from as far away as New Zealand to attend.

During field trips, Montana Instructors demonstrated Hunter Education field course techniques. Region One

Instructors Dan Atkinson, Wayne Stevens, Don Bothwell, Judy Sommers, Brian Sommers, Steve White, Leonard Howke, and Frank Sighting helped conduct the field course demonstration. Other instructors from across Montana took part as well.

Hunter Education Instructors are needed for the upcoming fall courses for youth 12-17 years of age. Please call FWP if you are interested in becoming a volunteer Hunter Education Instructor. 



A GROUP PHOTO featured some of the more than two dozen Montana Hunter Education Instructors who attended the International Hunter Education Association meeting in Missoula. These instructors helped shape the course of future planning for the association.



TRAINING SESSION. Kalispell Hunter Education Instructor Don Bothwell (with broad-brim hat) conducts a demonstration field exercise with a group of Hunter Education Coordinators from across the U. S. and Canada.

Helicopter Surveys: Why Fly?

By Tim Thier, FWP Area Biologist

Each year, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks conducts a variety of helicopter surveys around the region to better assess the status of big game herds. Occasionally, we get complaints from people on "what the heck are you doing and why are you doing it?" People don't like the noise a helicopter creates and they view the activity as little more than another way to harass animals. I'll try to address these and other issues and present some real, live data.

Helicopter surveys are just one tool we use to monitor wildlife populations. Other tools include check stations, hunter phone surveys, ground surveys, research projects, and information relayed by the public. The latter is especially important, because it is impossible for a biologist to know his or her entire area intimately,

unlike the resident who watches wildlife daily around his home. While information from the public is important, neighbors will sometimes disagree on what they are seeing. Therefore, it is important to look at a variety of information sources to get the most accurate picture possible on the status of wildlife populations. This information is then used to document population trends and to make recommendations to the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission to shorten or lengthen seasons or to increase or decrease quotas.

Helicopter surveys are one way to get a lot of information in a short amount of time. A good example would be last year's spring helicopter survey east of Eureka. In 1.6 hours of survey time, I counted and classified 617 mule deer, 132 elk, 145

white-tailed deer and 24 bighorn sheep. Had I tried to duplicate this effort from the ground, it would have taken me many days to get that kind of a sample. Also, I would have had a problem with duplications (how many times did I count the same animal, but on different days?). And like it or not, there still would have been some disturbance to the animals.

Besides total numbers observed, trends monitored include the number of young per 100 females and the number of adult males per 100 females. In order to distinguish a calf from a cow elk, or a cow moose from a bull that has shed his antlers, it may be necessary to approach animals fairly closely. Every effort is made to get in, do our classification, and get out as quickly as possible. We don't want to unduly disturb animals and besides, spooked animals are more difficult to classify. Usually, no more than seconds are spent over any individual animal.

Different species respond differently to the presence of a helicopter. Bighorn sheep are the most sensitive, wolves the least. We actually had an incident in the North Fork four years ago where 2 wolves tried to use our helicopter to restrict the escape of a small herd of elk, as they rushed toward them from the opposite side! Elk and moose are towards the more tolerant end of the



VIEW FROM THE SKY. Surveys of wildlife from the air are cost and time-efficient — and much more accurate than ground surveys.

spectrum, deer less so. It is not unusual to fly over moose or elk and they won't even rise from their beds.

Helicopter flights are scheduled for the time of year when the observability of animals is greatest. Flying is expensive, so we try to spend the least amount of time in the air as possible. For the North Fork, that means a total of 3 helicopter flights each year. The first is usually conducted in late April and is focused on elk along the North Fork bottoms, both inside and out of GNP. This is the most controversial of North Fork flights due to its proximity to people. A second flight is conducted in late August in the upper Trail Creek area that focuses on black and grizzly bears in huckleberry fields. A third is conducted in mid-December for moose along the foothills, from the Red Bench Burn area north to Tepee Lake.

Below is a table showing some of the survey results for moose in HD 110, which consists primarily of the North Fork. You can see a general decrease in the total numbers of moose observed. You can also see some dismal calf/cow ratios, especially for the period 1995-1998. As a result, the FWP Commission reduced the number of moose permits for this district from 35 to 12. You can also see that the proportion of calves has increased significantly the last couple of years. Hopefully, we can again begin to increase the number of permits within the near future. It is also interesting to note the consistently high proportion of bulls observed, among the best

in Region One. Assuming a 50:50 sex rate at birth and a preference for bulls by hunters, there is little evidence hunting is negatively impacting this population.

In summary, helicopter flights are an extremely valuable tool for monitoring wildlife populations. I will make every effort to see they are done in a manner that is least disturbing to wildlife and people. If anyone has a complaint, concern, or would just like to chat, please don't hesitate to call me at 882-4697.

WILDLIFE SURVEYOR. *Wildlife Biologist Tim Thier, shown here radio tracking a lynx, manages wildlife in the North Fork, Stillwater, and Kootenai drainages.*

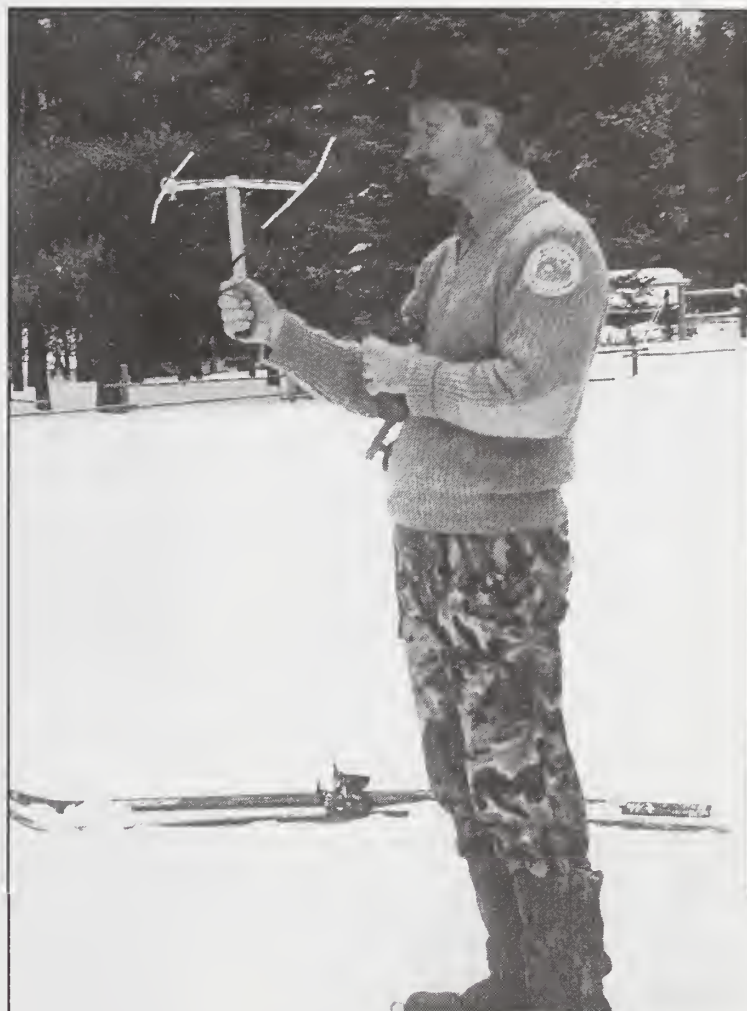



Table 1. Moose observed in Moose HD 110 on helicopter surveys, 1994-2000

DATE	TOTAL	BULLS	COWS	CALVES	UNCL	CALVES: 100 Cows	BULLS: 100 Cows	SURVEY HRS.
12/12/94	74	29	31	8	6	25.8	93.5	2.0
12/15/95	48	22	23	2	1	8.7	95.6	2.0
1996	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.0
12/19/97	43	22	20	1	0	5.0	110.0	2.9
12/19/98	28	15	10	2	1	20.0	150.0	1.2
12/18/99	49	20	19	8	2	42.1	105.3	1.5
12/20/00	39	20	14	5	0	35.7	142.9	1.5

Boat Dealers Honored for Contributions

Region One Wardens presented special awards to three businesses in northwest Montana to thank them for loaning personal watercraft for enforcement patrols. Recognized were Shane Shima of Ronan Power Products

(left), Karen Welcome of Jesco Boat Center (with Columbia Falls area game warden Perry Brown, below), and Tony Kohler of Penco Power Products (with Whitefish area game warden Lee Anderson). Because of their contributions,

wardens were able to make more water safety patrols on northwest Montana's lakes and streams. 

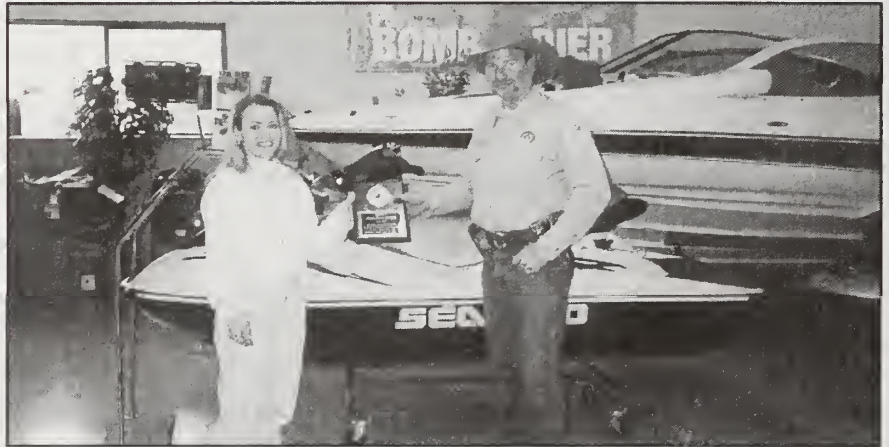
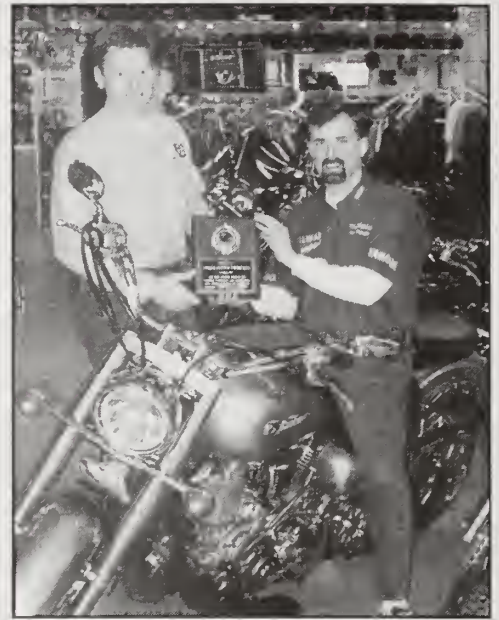
NEW BOATING REGULATIONS IN EFFECT

The FWP Commission adopted new NO WAKE rules for all lakes and reservoirs in the western fishing district. This new rule applies to all motorized watercraft. The rule has two parts:

- All lakes and reservoirs 35 acres and less in size will be limited to no wake operation only (a wake is defined as any white water in the track or path of the vessel)
- All lakes greater than 35 acres in size will be limited to no wake operation within 200 feet from shore.

Exceptions include towing a water skier and running a watercraft that requires a minimum speed to remain upright. In these cases, the most direct route must be taken through the no-wake area to and from dock or shore.

For more information, contact FWP Offices in Kalispell or Missoula.



Take the trout identification challenge!

Log on to Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks' website (www.fwp.state.mt.us) and click on the bull trout icon. You will find a trout identification and education testing program that will test your skills on trout ID.

You take a pre-test and training, then a final test. If you pass, you can print out an

attractive certificate; you will be a bull trout expert!

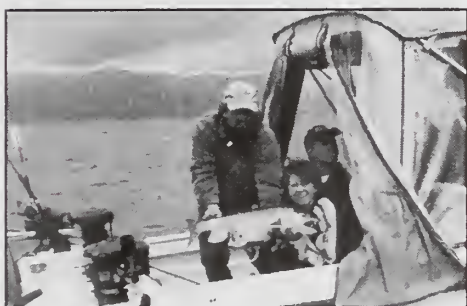
The website program was a cooperative effort among FWP, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Avista Corporation, Idaho Council of

Trout Unlimited, Idaho Fish and Game, the U.S. Forest Service, and the University of Montana.



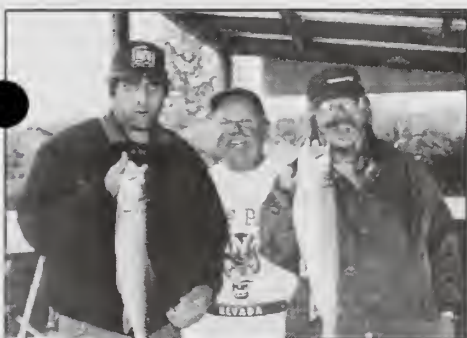
Anglers Hosted for Special Fishing Day

The eighth annual Fishing Without Barriers Day came off successfully despite unstable weather conditions. A total of 50 anglers with disabilities caught 24 lake trout from 10 Montana Charterboat Association boats and private craft. Anglers hailed from the Flathead Valley, Polson, and as far south as Missoula. A number of anglers also caught perch, peamouth, and northern pike minnow from the docks.



Barry Schrammeck of Woods Bay Marina provided his facility for the event. Charter Boat captains included: Jim Landwehr, Glacier Fishing Charters; Shorty Goggins, Cal Mishchke, A-Able Fishing Charters; Jerry Landskron, Woods Bay Charters; Dusty Bagley, Bagley Guide Service; Karl Mann, Montana Experience Outfitters; Jeff Rach Flathead Lake Charters. Private Boat Captains included Dan Hartwell of Bigfork, Daryl Handy (Eureka), and Jim Vashro (Kalispell).

THE BIGGEST FISH. Charterboat Captain Dusty Bagley shows a lake trout caught by young anglers Matt Sather of Bigfork and Rachel Osborn of Missoula. The pair teamed up to catch the largest fish, a 33-1/2-inch, 16-pound lake trout. They released their fish after photographs. Matt and Rachel each received a tackle box donated by Sportsman Ski Haus.




CAPTAIN Jim Landwehr helped these two anglers (above) catch these nice-size lake trout while Charterboat Captain Jeff Rach of Flathead Lake Charters helped anglers catch three fine lake trout (below).

YOUNG VOLUNTEER Kevin Fraley (below) helped anglers catch fish from the dock while the anglers waited for an available boat.



Anglers, helpers, and boat captains enjoyed a fish fry and barbecue after fishing. All anglers received prizes donated by Snappy's Sport Center, Thad's Tackle Shop of Olney, and Flathead Industries.

Others donating to the event included: Fun Beverage, Tidyman's, Super I Foods, Pepsi, Coca Cola, Costco, and Meadowgold. The Fish, Wildlife and Parks Crossing the Barriers Committee coordinated the event with volunteers Jerry and Ilene Howard, Bob Domrose, Harry Grove, Tim, Corinna, and Ben Brubaker. Also helping out were Marty Watkins, Sue McDonald, Ross Gannon, Dan and Travis Vincent, Tim Taylor, Garland Hamilton, and Kevin Fraley.

The Fishing Without Barriers Day is held annually to provide an opportunity for people with disabilities to get out on Flathead Lake and enjoy fishing with the experts. For many of the anglers, it is their sole fishing experience for the year. 



HELPING OUT. CAPTAINS Cal Mischke (above) and Jerry Landskron (below, with rod) were able to hook trout for anglers on their boats.



New Region One Commissioner Looks for Input


By Rich Lane

I am honored to be selected to represent western Montana sportsmen and women on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission. It is my responsibility to help make decisions that affect outdoor recreation opportunities for all Montanans and ensure the conservation of our fish and wildlife resources. It is tough to always make the right decisions, and even tougher to please all interests. That is why I need you to let me know what issues affect you. Call, write or email me whenever there is something I need to know. Also, remember that I am only one voice in a group of five commissioners from across this big state, so I often need broad support to help make an impact.

I am very proud of the lion hunters and houndsmen in western Montana. This group is undoubtedly the most passionate, involved group of sportsmen I have worked with so far. They are working hard towards a balanced solution that addresses the increased interest and pressures on their sport. I appreciate their tenacity and willingness to work together. They are persistent, persuasive and polite, all good qualities.

The 'pressures' I refer to above affect all of us who love the outdoors and the Montana quality of life. One of my goals for the next four years is to work with FWP, other agencies, and landowners to address the issues of hunter access, sportsmen/landowner relations and habitat improvement. I can assure you those issues are at the top of the list within the Region One FWP department as well.

One shining example is the recent acquisition of the Palmer property adjacent to Ninepipe Wildlife Management Area. This beautiful piece of pheasant habitat, purchased with sportsmen dollars, will be available for public hunting this fall. But don't wait until then to take a look at your investment in open space and wildlife; enjoy the birdwatching this summer or better yet call the FWP Kalispell office to find out how you can volunteer to help with habitat improvement.

I was appointed to serve you and have a lot to learn, so jump onto the FWP Home Page, www.fwp.state.mt.us and go to the Commission link to email me. Or pick up the phone and call me at 406-721-0364. Letters are helpful too. I look forward to working with you. 



FWP Commissioner Rich Lane

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